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THE CONFLICT WITH SLAVERY

JUSTICE AND EXPEDIENCY

OR, SLAVERY CONSIDERED WITH A VIEW TO ITS RIGHTFUL AND EFFECTUAL REMEDY, ABOLITION.

(1833.) "There is a law above all the enactments of human codes, the same throughout the world, the same in all time,—such as it was before the daring genius of Columbus pierced the night of ages, and opened to one world the sources of wealth and power and knowledge, to another all unutterable woes; such as it is at this day: it is the law written by the finger of God upon the heart of man; and by that law, unchangeable and eternal while men despise fraud, and loathe rapine, and abhor blood, they shall reject with indignation the wild and guilty fantasy that man can hold property in man." —LORD BROUGHAM.

IT may be inquired of me why I seek to agitate the subject of Slavery in New England, where we all acknowledge it to be an evil. Because such an acknowledgment is not enough on our part. It is doing no more than the slave-master and the slave-trader. "We have found," says James Monroe, in his speech on the subject before the Virginia Convention, "that this evil has preyed upon the very vitals of the Union; and has been prejudicial to all the states in which it has existed." All the states in their several Constitutions and declarations of rights have made a similar statement. And what has been the consequence of this general belief in the evil of human servitude? Has it sapped the foundations of the infamous system? No. Has it decreased the number of its victims? Quite the contrary. Unaccompanied by philanthropic action, it has been in a moral point of view worthless, a thing without vitality, sightless, soulless, dead.

But it may be said that the miserable victims of the system have our sympathies. Sympathy the sympathy of the Priest and the Levite, looking on, and acknowledging, but holding itself aloof from mortal suffering. Can such hollow sympathy reach the broken of heart, and does the blessing of those who are ready to perish answer it? Does it hold back the lash from the slave, or sweeten his bitter bread? One's heart and soul are becoming weary of this sympathy, this heartless mockery of feeling; sick of the common cant of hypocrisy, wreathing the artificial flowers of sentiment over unutterable pollution and unimaginable wrong. It is white-washing the sepulchre to make us forget its horrible deposit. It is scattering flowers around the charnel-house and over the yet festering grave to turn away our thoughts "from the dead men's bones and all uncleanness," the pollution and loathsomeness below.

No! let the truth on this subject, undisguised, naked, terrible as it is, stand out before us. Let us no longer seek to cover it; let us no longer strive to forget it; let us no more dare to palliate it. It is better to meet it here with repentance than at the bar of God. The cry of the oppressed, of the millions who have perished among us as the brute perisheth, shut out from the glad tidings of salvation, has gone there before us, to Him who as a father pitieth all His children. Their blood is upon us as a nation; woe unto us, if we repent not, as a nation, in dust and ashes. Woe unto us if we say in our hearts, "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see?"

But it may be urged that New England has no participation in slavery, and is not responsible for its wickedness.

Why are we thus willing to believe a lie? New England not responsible! Bound by the United States constitution to protect the slave-holder in his sins, and yet not responsible! Joining hands with crime, covenanting with oppression, leaguering with pollution, and yet not responsible! Palliating the evil, hiding the evil, voting for the evil, do we not participate in it?

(Messrs. Harvey of New Hampshire, Mallary of Vermont, and Ripley of Maine, voted in the Congress of 1829 against

the consideration of a Resolution for inquiring into the expediency of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia.)

Members of one confederacy, children of one family, the curse and the shame, the sin against our brother, and the sin against our God, all the iniquity of slavery which is revealed to man, and all which crieth in the ear, or is manifested to the eye of Jehovah, will assuredly be visited upon all our people. Why, then, should we stretch out our hands towards our Southern brethren, and like the Pharisee thank God we are not like them? For so long as we practically recognize the infernal principle that "man can hold property in man," God will not hold us guiltless. So long as we take counsel of the world's policy instead of the justice of heaven, so long as we follow a mistaken political expediency in opposition to the express commands of God, so long will the wrongs of the slaves rise like a cloud of witnesses against us at the inevitable bar.

Slavery is protected by the constitutional compact, by the standing army, by the militia of the free states.

(J. Q. Adams is the only member of Congress who has ventured to speak plainly of this protection. See also his very able Report from the minority of the Committee on Manufactures. In his speech during the last session, upon the bill of the Committee of Ways and Means, after discussing the constitutional protection of slavery, he says: "But that same interest is further protected by the Laws of the United States. It was protected by the existence of a standing army. If the States of this Union were all free republican States, and none of them possessed any of the machinery of which he had spoken, and if another portion of the Union were not exposed to another danger, from their vicinity to the tribes of Indian savages, he believed it would be difficult to prove to the House any such thing as the necessity of a standing army. What in fact was the occupation of the army? It had been protecting this very same interest. It had been doing so ever since the army existed. Of what use to the district of Plymouth (which he there represented) was the standing army of

the United States? Of not one dollar's use, and never had been.")

Let us not forget that should the slaves, goaded by wrongs unendurable, rise in desperation, and pour the torrent of their brutal revenge over the beautiful Carolinas, or the consecrated soil of Virginia, New England would be called upon to arrest the progress of rebellion,—to tread out with the armed heel of her soldiery that spirit of freedom, which knows no distinction of cast or color; which has been kindled in the heart of the black as well as in that of the white.

And what is this system which we are thus protecting and upholding? A system which holds two millions of God's creatures in bondage, which leaves one million females without any protection save their own feeble strength, and which makes even the exercise of that strength in resistance to outrage punishable with death! which considers rational, immortal beings as articles of traffic, vendible commodities, merchantable property,—which recognizes no social obligations, no natural relations,—which tears without scruple the infant from the mother, the wife from the husband, the parent from the child. In the strong but just language of another: "It is the full measure of pure, unmixed, unsophisticated wickedness; and scorning all competition or comparison, it stands without a rival in the secure, undisputed possession of its detestable preeminence."

So fearful an evil should have its remedies. The following are among the many which have been from time to time proposed:—

1. Placing the slaves in the condition of the serfs of Poland and Russia, fixed to the soil, and without the right on the part of the master to sell or remove them. This was intended as a preliminary to complete emancipation at some remote period, but it is impossible to perceive either its justice or expediency.

2. Gradual abolition, an indefinite term, but which is understood to imply the draining away drop by drop, of the great ocean of wrong; plucking off at long intervals some, straggling branches of the moral Upas; holding out to unborn generations the shadow of a hope which the present may never feel gradually ceasing to do evil;

gradually refraining from robbery, lust, and murder: in brief, obeying a short-sighted and criminal policy rather than the commands of God.

3. Abstinence on the part of the people of the free states from the use of the known products of slave labor, in order to render that labor profitless. Beyond a doubt the example of conscientious individuals may have a salutary effect upon the minds of some of the slave-holders; I but so long as our confederacy exists, a commercial intercourse with slave states and a consumption of their products cannot be avoided.

(The following is a recorded statement of the venerated Sir William Jones: "Let sugar be as cheap as it may, it is better to eat none, better to eat aloes and colloquintida, than violate a primary law impressed on every heart not imbruted with avarice; than rob one human creature of those eternal rights of which no law on earth can justly deprive him.")

4. Colonization. The exclusive object of the American Colonization Society, according to the second article of its constitution, is to colonize the free people of color residing among us, in Africa or such other place as Congress may direct. Steadily adhering to this object it has nothing to do with slavery; and I allude to it as a remedy only because some of its friends have in view an eventual abolition or an amelioration of the evil.

Let facts speak. The Colonization Society was organized in 1817. It has two hundred and eighteen auxiliary societies. The legislatures of fourteen states have recommended it. Contributions have poured into its treasury from every quarter of the United States. Addresses in its favor have been heard from all our pulpits. It has been in operation sixteen years. During this period nearly one million human beings have died in slavery: and the number of slaves has increased more than half a million, or in round numbers, 550,000

The Colonization Society has been busily engaged all this while in conveying the slaves to Africa; in other words, abolishing slavery. In this very charitable occupation it has carried away of manumitted slaves 613

Balance against the society . . . 549,387!

But enough of its abolition tendency. What has it done for amelioration? Witness the newly enacted laws of some of the slave states, laws bloody as the code of Draco, violating the laws of Cod and the unalienable rights of His children?—(It will be seen that the society approves of these laws.)—But why talk of amelioration? Amelioration of what? of sin, of crime unutterable, of a system of wrong and outrage horrible in the eye of God Why seek to mark the line of a selfish policy, a carnal expediency between the criminality of hell and that repentance and its fruits enjoined of heaven?

For the principles and views of the society we must look to its own statements and admissions; to its Annual Reports; to those of its auxiliaries; to the speeches and writings of its advocates; and to its organ, the African Repository.

1. It excuses slavery and apologizes for slaveholders.

Proof. "Slavery is an evil entailed upon the present generation of slave-holders, which they must suffer, whether they will or not!" "The existence of slavery among us, though not at all to be objected to our Southern brethren as a fault," etc? "It (the society) condemns no man because he is a slave-holder." "Recognizing the constitutional and legitimate existence of slavery, it seeks not to interfere, either directly or indirectly, with the rights it creates. Acknowledging the necessity by which its present continuance and the rigorous provisions for its maintenance are justified," etc. "They (the Abolitionists) confound the misfortunes of one generation with the crimes of another, and would sacrifice both individual and public good to an unsubstantial theory of the rights of man."

2. It pledges itself not to oppose the system of slavery.

Proof. "Our society and the friends of colonization wish to be distinctly understood upon this point. From the beginning they have disavowed, and they do yet disavow, that their object is the emancipation of slaves."—(Speech of James S. Green, Esq., First Annual Report of the New Jersey Colonization Society.)

"This institution proposes to do good by a single specific course of measures. Its direct and specific purpose is not the abolition of slavery, or the relief of pauperism, or the extension of commerce and

civilization, or the enlargement of science, or the conversion of the heathen. The single object which its constitution prescribes, and to which all its efforts are necessarily directed, is African colonization from America. It proposes only to afford facilities for the voluntary emigration of free people of color from this country to the country of their fathers."

"It is no abolition society; it addresses as yet arguments to no master, and disavows with horror the idea of offering temptations to any slave. It denies the design of attempting emancipation, either partial or general."

"The Colonization Society, as such, have renounced wholly the name and the characteristics of abolitionists. On this point they have been unjustly and injuriously slandered. Into their accounts the subject of emancipation does not enter at all."

"From its origin, and throughout the whole period of its existence, it has constantly disclaimed all intention of interfering, in the smallest degree, with the rights of property, or the object of emancipation, gradual or immediate." . . . "The society presents to the American public no project of emancipation." — (Mr. Clay's Speech, *Idem*, vol. vi. pp. 13, 17.)

"The emancipation of slaves or the amelioration of their condition, with the moral, intellectual, and political improvement of people of color within the United States, are subjects foreign to the powers of this society."

"The society, as a society, recognizes no principles in reference to the slave system. It says nothing, and proposes to do nothing, respecting it." . . . "So far as we can ascertain, the supporters of the colonization policy generally believe that slavery is in this country a constitutional and legitimate system, which they have no inclination, interest, nor ability to disturb."

3. It regards God's rational creatures as property.

Proof. "We hold their slaves, as we hold their other property, sacred."

"It is equally plain and undeniable that the society, in the prosecution of this work, has never interfered or evinced even a disposition to interfere in any way with the rights of proprietors of slaves."

"To the slave-holder, who has charged upon them the wicked design of interfering with the rights of property under the specious pretext of removing a vicious and dangerous free population, they address themselves in a tone of conciliation and sympathy. We know your rights, say they, and we respect them."

4. It boasts that its measures are calculated to perpetuate the detested system of slavery, to remove the fears of the slave-holder, and increase the value of his stock of human beings.

Proof. "They (the Southern slave-holders) will contribute more effectually to the continuance and strength of this system (slavery) by removing those now free than by any or all other methods which can possibly be devised."

"So far from being connected with the abolition of slavery, the measure proposed would be one of the greatest securities to enable the master to keep in possession his own property."—(Speech of John Randolph at the first meeting of the Colonization Society.)

"The tendency of the scheme, and one of its objects, is to secure slave-holders, and the whole Southern country, against certain evil consequences growing out of the present threefold mixture of our population."

"There was but one way (to avert danger), but that might be made effectual, fortunately. It was to provide and keep open a drain for the excess beyond the occasions of profitable employment. Mr. Archer had been stating the case in the supposition, that after the present class of free blacks had been exhausted, by the operation of the plan he was recommending, others would be supplied for its action, in the proportion of the excess of colored population it would be necessary to throw off, by the process of voluntary manumission or sale. This effect must result inevitably from the depreciating value of the slaves, ensuing their disproportionate multiplication. The depreciation would be relieved and retarded at the same time by the process. The two operations would aid reciprocally, and sustain each other, and both be in the highest degree beneficial. It

was on the ground of interest, therefore, the most indisputable pecuniary interest, that he addressed himself to the people and legislatures of the slave-holding states."

"The slave-holder, who is in danger of having his slaves contaminated by their free friends of color, will not only be relieved from this danger, but the value of his slave will be enhanced."

5. It denies the power of Christian love to overcome an unholy prejudice against a portion of our fellow-creatures.

Proof. "The managers consider it clear that causes exist and are operating to prevent their (the blacks) improvement and elevation to any considerable extent as a class, in this country, which are fixed, not only beyond the control of the friends of humanity, but of any human power. Christianity will not do for them here what it will do for them in Africa. This is not the fault of the colored man, nor Christianity; but an ordination of Providence, and no more to be changed than the laws of Nature!"—(Last Annual Report of the American Colonization Society.)

"The habits, the feelings, all the prejudices of society—prejudices which neither refinement, nor argument, nor education, nor religion itself, can subdue—mark the people of color, whether bond or free, as the subjects of a degradation inevitable and incurable. The African in this country belongs by birth to the very lowest station in society, and from that station he can never rise, be his talents, his enterprise, his virtues what they may. . . . They constitute a class by themselves, a class out of which no individual can be elevated, and below which none can be depressed."

"Is it not wise, then, for the free people of color and their friends to admit, what cannot reasonably be doubted, that the people of color must, in this country, remain for ages, probably forever, a separate and inferior caste, weighed down by causes, powerful, universal, inevitable; which neither legislation nor Christianity can remove?"

6. It opposes strenuously the education of the blacks in this country as useless as well as dangerous.

Proof. "If the free colored people were generally taught to read it might be an inducement to them to remain in this country (that is,

in their native country). We would offer then no such inducement." — (Southern Religious Telegraph, February 19, 1831.)

"The public safety of our brethren at the South requires them (the slaves) to be kept ignorant and uninstructed."

"It is the business of the free (their safety requires it) to keep the slaves in ignorance. But a few days ago a proposition was made in the legislature of Georgia to allow them so much instruction as to enable them to read the Bible; which was promptly rejected by a large majority." — (Proceedings of New York State Colonization Society at its second anniversary.)

E. B. Caldwell, the first Secretary of the American Colonization Society, in his speech at its formation, recommended them to be kept "in the lowest state of ignorance and degradation, for (says he) the nearer you bring them to the condition of brutes, the better chance do you give them of possessing their apathy."

My limits will not admit of a more extended examination. To the documents from whence the above extracts have been made I would call the attention of every real friend of humanity. I seek to do the Colonization Society no injustice, but I wish the public generally to understand its character.

The tendency of the society to abolish the slave-trade by means of its African colony has been strenuously urged by its friends. But the fallacy of this is now admitted by all: witness the following from the reports of the society itself: —

"Some appalling facts in regard to the slave-trade have come to the knowledge of the Board of Managers during the last year. With undiminished atrocity and activity is this odious traffic now carried on all along the African coast. Slave factories are established in the immediate vicinity of the colony; and at the Gallinas (between Liberia and Sierra Leone) not less than nine hundred slaves were shipped during the last summer, in the space of three weeks."

April 6, 1832, the House of Commons of England ordered the printing of a document entitled "Slave-Trade, Sierra Leone," containing official evidence of the fact that the pirates engaged in the African slave-trade are supplied from the stores of Sierra Leone and Liberia with such articles as the infernal traffic demands! An able

English writer on the subject of Colonization thus notices this astounding fact:—

"And here it may be well to observe, that as long as negro slavery lasts, all colonies on the African coast, of whatever description, must tend to support it, because, in all commerce, the supply is more or less proportioned to the demand. The demand exists in negro slavery; the supply arises from the African slave-trade. And what greater convenience could the African slave-traders desire than shops well stored along the coast with the very articles which their trade demands. That the African slave-traders do get thus supplied at Sierra Leone and Liberia is matter of official evidence; and we know, from the nature of human things, that they will get so supplied, in defiance of all law or precaution, as long as the demand calls for the supply, and there are free shops stored with all they want at hand. The shopkeeper, however honest, would find it impossible always to distinguish between the African slave-trader or his agents and other dealers. And how many shopkeepers are there anywhere that would be over scrupulous in questioning a customer with a full purse?"

But we are told that the Colonization Society is to civilize and evangelize Africa.

"Each emigrant," says Henry Clay, the ablest advocate which the society has yet found, "is a missionary, carrying with him credentials in the holy cause of civilization, religion, and free institutions."

Beautiful and heart-cheering idea! But stay who are these emigrants, these missionaries?

The free people of color. "They, and they only," says the African Repository, the society's organ, "are qualified for colonizing Africa."

What are their qualifications? Let the society answer in its own words:— Free blacks are a greater nuisance than even slaves themselves."— (African Repository, vol. ii. p. 328.)

"A horde of miserable people—the objects of universal suspicion— subsisting by plunder."

"An anomalous race of beings the most debased upon earth."— (African Repository, vol. vii. p. 230.)

"Of all classes of our population the most vicious is that of the free colored." — (Tenth Annual Report of the Colonization Society.)

I might go on to quote still further from the "credentials" which the free people of color are to carry with them to Liberia. But I forbear.

I come now to the only practicable, the only just scheme of emancipation: Immediate abolition of slavery; an immediate acknowledgment of the great truth, that man cannot hold property in man; an immediate surrender of baneful prejudice to Christian love; an immediate practical obedience to the command of Jesus Christ: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."

A correct understanding of what is meant by immediate abolition must convince every candid mind that it is neither visionary nor dangerous; that it involves no disastrous consequences of bloodshed and desolation; but, on the, contrary, that it is a safe, practicable, efficient remedy for the evils of the slave system.

The term immediate is used in contrast with that of gradual. Earnestly as I wish it, I do not expect, no one expects, that the tremendous system of oppression can be instantaneously overthrown. The terrible and unrebukable indignation of a free people has not yet been sufficiently concentrated against it. The friends of abolition have not forgotten the peculiar organization of our confederacy, the delicate division of power between the states and the general government. They see the many obstacles in their pathway; but they know that public opinion can overcome them all. They ask no aid of physical coercion. They seek to obtain their object not with the weapons of violence and blood, but with those of reason and truth, prayer to God, and entreaty to man.

They seek to impress indelibly upon every human heart the true doctrines of the rights of man; to establish now and forever this great and fundamental truth of human liberty, that man cannot hold property in his brother; for they believe that the general admission of this truth will utterly destroy the system of slavery, based as that system is upon a denial or disregard of it. To make use of the clear exposition of an eminent advocate of immediate abolition, our plan of emancipation is simply this: "To promulgate the